

# THE SIGN AT SIX

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AUTHOR OF  
THE BLAZED TRAIL,  
THE CONJUROR'S HOUSE, ETC., ETC.

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## CHAPTER I.

## The Owner of New York.

Percy Darrow, a young man of scientific training, indolent manners, effeminate appearance, hidden energy, and absolute courage, lounged through the doors of the Atlas Building. Since his rescue from the volcanic island that had witnessed the piratical murder of his old employer, Doctor Schermerhorn, the spectacular dissolution of the murderers, and his own imprisonment in a cave beneath the very roar of an eruption, he had been nursing his shattered nerves back to their normal strength. Now he felt that at last he was able to go to work again. Therefore, he was about to approach a man of influence among practical scientists, from whom he hoped further occupation.

As the express elevator shot upward, he passed a long slender hand across his eyes. The rapid motion confused him still. The car stopped, and the metallic gates clanged open. Darrow obediently stepped forth. Only when the elevator had disappeared did his upward glance bring to him the knowledge that he had disembarked one floor too soon.

Darrow's eye fell on a lettered sign outside the nearest door. He smiled a slow red-lipped smile beneath his small silky mustache, dropped his black eyelashes in a flicker of reminiscence, hesitated a moment, then stepped languidly forward and opened the door. The sign indicated the headquarters of the very modest commission-ership behind which McCarthy chose to work. McCarthy, quite simply, at that time owned New York.

As Darrow entered, McCarthy hung up the telephone receiver with a smash, and sat glaring at the instrument. After a moment he turned his small bright eyes toward the newcomer.

"Hello, Perc," he growled. "Didn't see you. Say, I'm so mad my skin cracks. Just now some measly little shrimp called me up from a public booth. What you suppose he wanted, now? Oh, nothin'! Just told me in so many words for me to pack up my little trunk and sail for Europe and never come back! That's all! He give me until Sunday, too." McCarthy barked out a short laugh, and reached for a cigar-box, which he held out to Darrow.

Percy shook his head. "So he wants you to go to Europe?"

"Wants me? Orders me? Says I got to," McCarthy laughed. "Lovely thought!"

He puffed out a cloud of smoke. "Says if I don't obey orders he'll send me a 'sign' to convince me!" went on the boss. "He's got a mean voice. He ought to have a tag hung on him and get carried to the morgue. He give me the shivers, like a dead man. I never hear such a unholy thing outside a graveyard at midnight!"

Percy Darrow was surveying him with leisurely amusement, a slight



McCarthy Stumped Down a Flight of Stairs.

smile playing over his narrow dark face.

"His 'sign' he promised is apt to be a bomb," observed Darrow.

"He's nutty, all right," McCarthy agreed, "but when he said that, he was doing the tall religious. He's got a bug that way."

"Your affair," said Darrow. "Just the same, I'd have an outer office."

"Outer office—got!" said the boss. "An outer office just gets cluttered up with people waiting. Here they've got to say right out in meeting—If I want 'em to. What's the good word, Perc? What can I do for you?"

Darrow smiled. "You know very well, my fat friend, that the only reason you like me at all is that I'm the one and only man who comes into

this office who doesn't want one single thing of you."

"I suppose that's it," agreed McCarthy. The telephone rang. He snatched down the receiver, listened a moment, and thrust forward his heavy jaw. "Not on your life!" he growled in answer to some question. While he was still occupied with the receiver, Percy Darrow nodded and sauntered out.

## CHAPTER II.

## The Shadow of Mystery.

Darrow walked up the one flight of steps to the story above. He found his acquaintance in, and at once broached the subject of his errand. Doctor Knox promised the matter his attention. The two men then embarked on a long discussion of Professor Schermerhorn's discovery of super-radium, and the strange series of events that had encompassed his death. Into the midst of the discussion burst McCarthy, his face red with suppressed anger.

"Can I use your phone?" he growled. "Oh, yes," said he, as he caught sight of the instrument. Without awaiting the requested permission, he jerked the receiver from its hook and placed it to his ear.

"Deader than a smelt!" he burst out. "This is a nice way to run a public business! Thanks," he nodded to Doctor Knox, and stormed out.

Darrow rose languidly.

"I'll see you again," he told Knox. "At present I'm going to follow the human cyclone. It takes more than mere telephones to wake McCarthy up like that."

He found the boss in the hall, his finger against the "down" button. "That's three cars has passed me," he snarled, trying to peer through the ground glass that, in the Atlas Building, surrounded the shaft. "I'll tan somebody's hide. Down!" he belowed at a shadow on the glass.

"Have a cigarette," proffered Percy Darrow. "Calm down. To the scientific eye you're out of condition for such emotions. You thicknecks are subject to apoplexy."

"Oh, shut up!" growled McCarthy. "There isn't a phone in order in this building two floors either way. I've tried 'em—and there hasn't been for twenty minutes. And I can't get a messenger to answer a call; and that ring-labeled, star-spangled ornament of a janitor won't answer his private bell. I'll get him bounced so high the blackbirds will build nests in his ear before he comes down again."

After trying vainly to stop a car on its way up or down, McCarthy stumped down a flight of stairs, followed more leisurely by the calmly unharmed Darrow. Here the same performance was repeated. A half dozen men by now had joined them. So they progressed from story to story until an elevator boy, attracted by their frantic shouts, stopped to see what was the matter. Immediately the door was slid back on its runners, McCarthy seized the astonished operator by the collar.

"Come out of that, you scum of the earth!" he roared. "Come out of that and tell me why you don't stop for signals!"

"I ain't seen no signals!" gasped the elevator boy.

Some one punched the button, but the little, round, annunciator disk in the car failed to illuminate.

"I wonder if there's anything in order in this miserable hole!" snarled McCarthy.

"The lights is gone out," volunteered the boy; and indeed for the first time the men now crowding the car noticed that the incandescents were dead.

While McCarthy stormed out to spread abroad impartial threats against two public utility concerns for interfering with his business, Percy Darrow, his curiosity aroused, interviewed the janitor. Under that functionary's guidance he examined the points of entrance for the different wires used for lighting and communication; looked over the private-bell installations, and ascended again to the corridor, abstractedly dusting his fingers. There he found a group of the building's tenants, among whom he distinguished Doctor Knox.

"Same complaint, I suppose—no phones, no lights, no bells," he remarked.

"Seems to be," replied Knox. "General condition. Acts as though the main arteries had been cut outside."

"Inside bells? House phones?" suggested Darrow.

The repair men came in double-quick time and great confidence. They went to work in an assured manner, which soon slackened to a slower bewilderment. Some one disappeared, to return with a box of new batteries. The head repair man connected a group of these with a small bell in the executive office. The instrument, however, failed to respond.

"Try you ammeter," suggested Darrow, who had followed.

"The delicate needle of the instrument did not quiver."

"Batteries dead!" said the repair man. "Jim, what the hotel-bill do you mean by getting dead batteries? Go back and bring a new lot, and test 'em."

In due time Jim returned. "These test to fifteen," said he. "Go to it!"

"Test—nothing!" roared the repair man after a moment. "These are dead, too."

Percy Darrow left the ensuing argument to its own warmth. It was growing late. In the corridor a few hastily-brought lamps cast a dim light. Percy collided against Doctor Knox entering the building.

"Not fixed yet?" asked the latter in evident disappointment. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know," said Darrow slowly. "It puzzles me. It's more than an ordinary break of connections or short-circuiting through apparatus. If one could imagine a big building like this polarized in some way—anyway, the electricity is dead. Look here." He pulled an electric flash-light from his pocket. "Bought this fresh on my way here. Tested it, of course. Now, there's nothing wonderful about these toys going back on a man; but"—he pressed the button and peered down the lens—"this is a funny coincidence." He turned the lens toward his friend. The filament was dark.

## CHAPTER III.

## The Moving Finger Writes.

The condition of affairs in the Atlas Building lasted long enough to carry the matter up to the experts in the employ of the companies; that is to say, until about three o'clock the following morning. Then, without reason, and all at once, the whole building from top to bottom was a blaze of incandescent light.

The little group of workmen and experts nodded in a competent and satisfied manner, and began leisurely



An Astonishing Sight Met His Eyes.

to pack their tools as though at the successful completion of a long and difficult job.

But every man jack of them knew perfectly well that the electrical apparatus of the building was now in exactly the same condition as it had been the evening before. No repair work had followed a futile investigation.

As the group moved toward the outer air, the head repair man quietly dropped behind. Surprisingly he applied the slender cords of his pocket ammeter to the zinc and carbon of the dead batteries concerning whose freshness he and his assistant had argued. The delicate needle leaped forward, quivered like a snake's tongue, and hovered over a number.

"Fifteen," read the repair man; and then, after a moment: "Hell!"

The daily business, therefore, opened normally. The elevator shot from floor to floor; the telephones rang; the call-bells buzzed, and all was well. At six o'clock came the scrub-woman; at half past seven the office boys; at eight the clerks; a little later some of the heads; and precisely at nine Malachi McCarthy, as was his invariable habit.

As the bulky form of the political boss pushed around the leaves of the revolving door, the elevator starter glanced at his watch. This was not to determine if McCarthy was on time, but to see if the watch was right.

McCarthy had recovered his good humor. He threw a joke at the negro polishing the brass, and paused genially to exchange a word with the elevator starter.

"Worked until about three o'clock," the latter answered a question. "Got it fixed all right. No, they didn't say what was the matter. Something to do with the wires, I suppose."

"Most likely," agreed McCarthy. At that moment an elevator dropped from above and came to rest, like a swift bird alighting. The doors parted to let out a young man wearing the cap of the United Wireless.

"Good morning, Mr. McCarthy," this young man remarked in passing. "Aren't going into the sign-painting business, are you?" He laughed.

"What you givin' us, Mike?" demanded McCarthy.

The young man wheeled to include the elevator starter in the joke.

"Air was full of dope most of last night from some merry little jester working a toy, home-made. He just kept repeating the same thing—something about McCarthy, at six o'clock you shall have a sign given unto you. It works, over and over all night. Some new advertising dodge, I reckon. Didn't know but you were the McCarthy and were getting

a present from some admiring constituent."

He threw back his head and laughed, but McCarthy's ready anger rose.

"Where did the stuff come from?"

"Out of the fresh air," replied the operator. "From most anywhere inside the zone of communication."

"Couldn't you tell who sent it?"

"No way. It wasn't signed. Come from quite a distance, though."

"How can you tell that?"

"You can tell by the way it sounds. Say, they ought to be a law about these amateurs cluttering up the air this way. Sometimes I got to pick my own dope out of a dozen or fifteen messages all ticking away in my head-piece at once."

"I know the crazy slob what sent 'em, all right, all right," growled McCarthy. "He's nutty for fair."

"Well, if he's nutty, I wish you'd hurry his little trip to Matteawan."

The boss went to his office, where he established himself behind his table-top desk. There all day he conducted a leisurely business of mysterious import, sitting where the cool autumn breeze from the river brought its refreshment.

There were two other, inner, offices to McCarthy's establishment, in which sat a private secretary and an office boy. Occasionally McCarthy, with some especial visitor, retired to one of these for a more confidential conversation. The secretary seemed always very busy; the office boy was often in the street. At noon McCarthy took lunch at a small round table in the cafe below. When he reappeared at the elevator shaft, the elevator starter again verified his watch. Malachi McCarthy had but the one virtue of accuracy, and that had to do with matters of time. At five minutes of six he reached for his hat; at three minutes of six he boarded the elevator.

"Runs all right today, Sam," he remarked genially to the boy whom he had half throttled the evening before.

He stood for a moment in the entrance of the building, enjoying the sight of the crowds hurrying to their cars, the elevated, the subway, and the ferries. The clang and roar of the city pleased his senses, as a vessel vibrates to its master tone. McCarthy was feeling largely paternal as he stepped toward the corner, for to a great extent the destinies of these people were in his hands.

"Easy marks!" was his philanthropic expression of this sentiment.

At the corner he stopped for a car. He glanced up at the clock at the Metropolitan tower. The bronze hand pointed to the stroke of six. As he looked, the first note of the quarter chimes rang out. The car swung the corner and headed down the street.

The sweet chimes ceased their fourfold phrasing, and the great bell began its spaced and solemn booming.

One!—Two!—Three!—Four!—Five! Six! McCarthy counted. At the recollection of a crazy message from the Unknown, he smiled. He stepped forward to hold up his hand at the car. Somewhat to his surprise the car had already stopped some twenty feet away.

McCarthy picked his way to the car.

"Wonder you wouldn't stop at a crossing," he growled.

"Juice give out," explained the motor-man.

McCarthy clambered aboard and sat down in a comfortably filled car. Up and down the perspective of the street could be seen other cars, also stalled. Ten minutes slipped by; then Malachi McCarthy grew impatient. With a muttered growl he rose, elbowed his way through the strap-hangers, and stepped to the street.

A row of idle taxicabs stood in front of the Atlas Building. Into the first of these bounced McCarthy, throwing his address to the expectant chauffeur.

The man hopped down from his box, threw on the coil switch and ran to the front. He turned the engine over the compression, but no explosion followed. He repeated the effort a dozen times. Then, grasping the starting handle with a firmer grip, he "whirled" the engine—without result.

"What's the matter? Can't you make her go?" demanded McCarthy, thrusting his head from the door.

"Will you please listen, sir, and see

tem by the Orientals. Another point in favor of the quince is that it is the fruit which was sacred to Venus, the goddess of love, and in a great many of the ancient writings the quince is very frequently mentioned in this manner. In Babylonian Ishtar took the place of Venus in the Roman mythology, and it should be remembered that the story of the creation originated with the Babylonians. All evidence seems to point away from the apple having been the "Forbidden Fruit," and towards the quince as having been that fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil."

Joviality Out of Place.

"Your mistake was in misunderstanding your country," said Mr. Plowden, to a man and woman found dancing in the street and charged with disorderly conduct at Marylebone.

"This is not a country where people can afford to be jovial. You must cultivate a spirit of melancholy if you want to be safe. Go away and be as sad as you can."—London Tit-Bits.

Question of Degree.

On a writ of error to the supreme court of one of the territories, counsel for plaintiff in error sharply criticized the rulings of the trial judge. When the counsel for the defendant in error began his reply, the following took place:

"May it please your honors, before I finish my argument, I think I can show you that the trial judge was not as crazy as counsel on the other side would make him out to be."

By a member of the court: "Let me understand you; you admit the fact of insanity of the trial judge, but deny its degree?"—Case and Comment.

Merely a Popular Belief.

Scholars Question Whether the Apple Was the "Forbidden Fruit" in the Garden of Eden.

Why and how it has happened that the apple has been spoken of as the fruit that was forbidden in the Garden of Eden is one of the great puzzles of Biblical scholars. The fact is that in Genesis 3, where the incident of the eating of this fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" is mentioned, no name whatever is given to the fruit. All that is said is: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (verse 6).

In fact, scholars doubt very seriously whether it was the apple at all. They suggest that all evidence points to it having been the quince, fragrance of which was held in the highest esteem by the Orientals. Another point in favor of the quince is that it is the fruit which was sacred to Venus, the goddess of love, and in a great many of the ancient writings the quince is very frequently mentioned in this manner. In Babylonian Ishtar took the place of Venus in the Roman mythology, and it should be remembered that the story of the creation originated with the Babylonians. All evidence seems to point away from the apple having been the "Forbidden Fruit," and towards the quince as having been that fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil."

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## RECORDS BROKEN

## HUNTING SEASON CLOSES WITH DEATH LIST OF ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE.

Many Careless Sportsmen Snuff Out Own Lives—Two Dozen Killed By Their Companions.

Western Newspaper Union News Service.

Chicago, Ill.—The hunting season, which closed, cost 135 lives. In addition to the death toll, which is considerably larger than in any previous year, 125 persons were injured, several of them fatally. One looks in vain for any new causes for the long list of casualties. A much greater number have shot themselves this season, by reason of careless handling of weapons, no fewer than 37 having lost their lives at their own hands and 24 others escaping with more or less severe injuries.

The deadly companion was abroad this year, as usual, and to his presence were due 24 deaths. He also inflicted injuries on 19 others. The man who shoots every time he sees a movement in a bush, thinking it must be caused by some species of game, can reflect on the fact that that sort of hunting resulted in the death of 17 and the injury of 10.

Drowning is well up in the causes of fatalities, 16 hunters having found watery graves while in quest of game. It is estimated that there were nearly 60,000 hunters in Wisconsin and Michigan, and when to this number are added the thousands who took the trail in Minnesota, Maine and New York the total number will reach well up to 100,000.

## RUSH ORDERS SENT.

Philadelphia.—Orders were received at the League Island navy yard for the battleship Montana to be made ready for sailing to Mexican waters as quickly as possible. The torpedo boat Roe also was ordered to sail at once and another vessel, supposedly the battleship Mississippi, has been ordered to prepare to sail on 48 hours' notice. The transport Hancock is under rush orders, too, and will be placed in active commission this week.

## "MUTINY ABOARD" LYNTON.

Seattle, Wash.—The British bark Lynton, bound from Santa Rosalia, Mexico, for the Columbia river, was sighted off Cape Flattery, signaling "assistance wanted—mutiny." The revenue cutter Manning, cruising in the Strait of Juan De Fuca to assist shipping, is believed to have gone to the Lynton's assistance.

## ASSASSIN USES AX.

New York.—Antonio Lapello, 35 years old, was slain while asleep in his room at 351 East One Hundred and Fourteenth street. His head had been split from crown to chin with an ax and then split across the eyes. The body was discovered by his 11-year-old son, Pasquale, who had left the house less than half an hour before.

## CINCINNATI MARKETS

Hay—No. 1 timothy \$18.50@18.75, standard timothy \$17.50@17.75, No. 2 timothy \$16.50@17, No. 3 timothy \$14.50@15, No. 1 clover mixed \$17, No. 2 clover mixed \$15, No. 1 clover \$14.75@15, No. 2 clover \$12.75@13.

Oats—No. 2 white 43c, standard 41½@42½, No. 3 white 41½@42c, No. 4 white 40@41c, No. 2 mixed 41½@42c, No. 3 mixed 41@41½, No. 4 mixed 40@40½.

Wheat—No. 2 red 95@96½, No. 3 red 93@94c.

Poultry—Old hens, weighing over 4½ lbs, 15c; hens, under 4½ lbs, 13½c; roosters, 9½c; springers, 15c; spring ducks, white 4 lbs and over, 15c; ducks, under 4 lbs, 12c; turkeys, toms, old, 10 lbs and over, 16c; turkey hens, old, 10 lbs and over, 16c; young turkeys, 10 lbs and over, 16c.

Eggs—Prime firsts 41c, firsts 30c, ordinary firsts 34c, seconds 27c.

Cattle—Shippers \$6.50@7.50, extra \$7.60@7.75, butcher steers, extra \$7.35@7.50, good to choice \$6.50@7.25, common to fair \$5@6.25; heifers, extra \$7.25@7.50, good to choice \$6.25@7.25, common to fair \$4.75@6; cows, extra \$6.10@6.25, good to choice \$6.50@6.8, common to fair \$3.50@6.25, canners \$3.25@4.25.

Bulls—Bologna \$5.75@6.40, extra \$6.50, fat bulls \$6.25@6.50.

Calves—Extra \$11.50@11.75, fair to good \$9@11.25, common and large \$8@11.

Hogs—Selected heavy \$7.85@7.90, good to choice packers and butchers \$7.85@7.90, mixed packers \$7.75@7.85, stags \$4@7, common to choice fat sows \$4.50@7.60, extra \$7.65, light shippers \$7.25@7.75, pigs (110 lbs and less) \$5.50@7.

Sheep—Extra \$4.25, good to choice \$3.75@4.15, common to fair \$2@3.50.

Lambs—Extra \$7.25, good to choice \$6.75@7.15, common to fair \$5@6.50.

## ITALIAN RAILROAD SMASH-UP.

Rome.—Five persons were killed and 15 injured at Ceccano Station when the Rome-Naples express crashed into a stationary freight train which was on the wrong track. The engineer of the express, by throwing on the brakes and reversing his engine, managed to reduce the speed of his train sufficiently to avert a still greater disaster. The express locomotive, baggage car, dining car, two ordinary coaches and two freight cars were wrecked.